

#7

WOMEN OF FAIRHOPE
1894-1903

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It could be assumed that Fairhope, being a Single Tax Colony, would have other radical elements within it. The single tax doctrine, on which Fairhope is based, is radical in that it proposes an end to private ownership of land. Residents own the land in common in the form of an association. Individuals then rent land from the association for private use. The association of Fairhope takes responsibility for taxes levied by the government. Money remaining is used for public improvements or to buy more land. In the United States, where land ownership is closely tied to individualism and upward mobility, the single tax doctrine and Fairhope are radical.

Fairhope is gaining an enviable reputation for the energy, intelligence, and agreeableness of her people. This is going to be an important factor in her future growth. It is attracting and is going to attract a class of progressive, cultured, and agreeable people; as like attracts like. Time was when people looked upon us largely as freaks; and there were enough freaks among us to partially justify the opinion. On further acquaintance with us, however, they find us to be broad-minded, cultured, energetic people. Tenacious of our opinions it is true . . . but . . . willing to try our theories on ourselves and trust to the good results following to justify them.¹

A certain amount of importance is placed upon the date of this quote, August 15, 1898, because it falls near midway in the colony's first decade. For the "broadminded" women of Fairhope this could have been a time of feminist activism. It was at this time that the National American Suffrage Association was at its peak with Susan B. Anthony its president. According

to Delores Hayden "between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Depression, three generations of material feminists raised fundamental questions about what was called women's sphere and women's work."² Generalizations about this period of time that concern women's work, their social standing and essentially their plight and their liberation from it become simplistic. However true this quote may be, it is necessary at some time to put generalizations, such as this one, into perspective. Better is the question: How did women spend their time and what did they achieve? In Fairhope, during its first decade of growth, this question can be answered with a very positive result. Women were a tremendous motivating force in the community in the realms of social, cultural, and intellectual stimulation, financial and physical growth. In addition, their activities and daily lives brought national as well as international publicity to the colony.

A large part of this publicity was in cooperation with the Fairhope Courier which circulated across the United States and was the colony's primary propaganda vehicle. A notice in the Courier read, "Friend Smith of the [Baldwin] Times owes, we think, an apology to the ladies of Daphne and the Fairhope people who joined in giving the entertainment at the Court House recently --and which has never even been mentioned in the Times."³ The Courier, apparently unlike the Times, announced all women's meetings, all participants and purposes of events, and if possible details of these events. The articles and announcements reflected pride in the women and their activities. Biographical sketches

of women were often published when they visited or came to the colony to settle. Mary Ingham, a two year visitor at Fairhope was said to have "high literary taste and education." In reference to the Kennedy family's hardship as a result of the father's unemployment, the Courier described Mrs. Kennedy as being "indispensable as an assistant and as a good economic manager." Also adding dimension to the Courier were poems, letters, and articles written by women and several about women.

Marie Howland, a prominent woman of Fairhope wrote many of these articles herself. As Associate Editor of the Courier, Howland directly affected the slant of the Courier. Helping to produce the Courier as well as writing for it was a significant area in which women were involved in the official workings of the colony. In addition to Howland, three young women were, at different times, working in the production of the Courier. May Kennedy learned typesetting at the Courier office and was able to eventually work for the Times. She also worked part-time helping at the post office. Celeste Shepard worked as a compositor before going on to Normal School. On a more creative level. Winnie Patterson, an aspiring artist, designed the new head for the paper in 1899. Mrs. Clara Gaston, whose husband, Eb Gaston, was the editor, took over the running of the office and the post office while Gaston was away. Letters in the Courier also showed that women traveled in and out of Fairhope often. Sections from letters between friends, essentially greetings to the rest of the residents, were often printed in the paper to keep up contacts.

Mrs. J. A. Woods, one of the earliest Fairhope residents, and the second vice-president of Fairhope, wrote to the Courier while she was on an extended trip in the north. These letters were published in a series as they were received. Sometimes letters such as these were a critical means of conveying opinions, and in this context, critical for revealing interests of women. One letter from Woods was a condensed article written by Henry George and originally published in the National American Review entitled "How to Help the Unemployed."

Letters written to people outside of Fairhope were sometimes printed. Altoona A. Chapman, another early colonist, was especially involved in the single tax movement. Her letter to Mr. Hampton of the National Single Taxer was printed in full in the Courier. At Hampton's request she wrote of her opinions and impressions of Fairhope. Chapman wrote the letter in 1897 with years of experience behind her. She was the editor of the Letter Writing Corps of the National Single Taxer and often wrote on reform topics. She decided to move to Fairhope and live with her friend Woods. With that background she said of Fairhope that the climate was agreeable and that poverty was limited. She herself planned to cultivate a garden to live off of in the next year. She believed that Fairhope was run by single taxers who employed principles as closely as possible under the existing conditions. She mentioned being warned that the colony was not a true single tax colony. Her opinion of the criticism levied at Fairhope was that theorists had to be realistic in the face of existing laws and attitudes. She explained the governing system and noted that it seems fair

because her presence and advice have been requested, received and acted upon even though she is not a member. She asked for help and respect from national single taxers and that the Courier be included in the listing of single tax papers.

The letter served a purpose in that it was publicity for the colony. Chapman, an ardent single taxer and devoted to Fairhope, was always helping to publicize the colony and "Talks Fairhope at every opportunity." In 1903 she designed and sewed a Fairhope single tax flag and invented the Fairhope yell. Described as quite independent, she was also creative and resourceful. She suggested using Palmettos and other trees worthless for timber for making paper. Her livelihood was teaching music, which she did all over the Bay area and Baldwin County. There was a running commentary on Chapman's never ending success in her promotion of Courier subscribers from her travels.

Chapman was not the only woman involved early on in the cause of the single tax at Fairhope. A main indication of this is the positions held by women in the government of Fairhope. These women had an active concern in the preservation and growth of Fairhope from the beginning. The first of these women was Mrs. Dr. A. Lamon, about whom the Courier said "promises to be a valuable acquisition socially, intellectually, and musically." She was elected the first vice-president of the colony in 1895. Men and women were equally eligible to vote and hold office according to its constitution. Jennie Pollay was elected Superintendent of Public Health and Clara M. Gaston as a Trustee, two positions which were to be commonly held by women after 1895.

Mrs. Carrie P. Sykes and Dr. Clara E. Atkinson held positions in the association for most of the first decade. Dr. Atkinson, sister of the secretary of the colony, E. B. Gaston, came to Fairhope in 1895 at first to test the climate and decided to stay. That same year, Sykes became a member of the association. In 1896 both were elected as trustees of the colony. A trustee is the general supervisor of the colony officers and affairs. Atkinson continued in this position until 1902. There was a brief interval when Sykes left the colony to accept a job as assistant postmaster in Palmetto Harbor. She visited often and soon returned in 1900. She was elected vice-president of the colony in 1902 and was reelected in 1903.

In the year 1885 when Sykes and Atkinson first appeared in Fairhope, the constitution was challenged. Lamon, Gaston and Pollay were three signers of an amendment which proposed to reduce the entrance fee and relieve the association of buying and selling commodities as a service of distribution. More controversial was the new constitution proposed in October by Estelle Backman Brokaw and her husband, both authorities on economics. Estelle Brokaw was former director of the Single Tax Propaganda Association. She and her husband had just become members of Fairhope the month before. She was appointed to a committee to review the constitution and the result was a new constitution signed by four possibly prominent but not permanent women of the colony. Brokaw left Fairhope shortly after the defeat of her effort.

Early in the colony's history, women were actively involved in the signing of petitions, amendments, and statements with respect to colony government and state government. Two areas of

concern were the physical growth of Fairhope and suffrage laws. Three women comprised a delegation to support a petition to build a new road in Fairhope. More opposed the revision of the Alabama constitution in 1901, a major reason being its suffrage amendment which included "grandfather clauses." Suffrage for both Blacks and women was important to many but not all single taxers.

We are sorry to see that Mr. Bellangee claims that women's suffrage is not part of the single tax . . . The corner-stone of this political economy is the law of equal freedom. If this is true, then women's suffrage is part of that political economy known as the single tax.⁴

The Progressive League, an open meeting for colonists and guests on Sundays, was an opportunity to express these views. Each Sunday a president was chosen for the next week who would speak and mediate discussion. Women took an active part in this activity. The text of these speeches were printed the next week in the Standard, giving speakers further recognition for their views. Topics varied from philosophical to specific personal experiences or interests. Woods spoke on one occasion about her travels north while Delia Knowles, who was to become the colony president's wife, read an article on "Universal Freedom." Woods on another occasion read from Papa's Own Girl, written by Howland who was expected to settle at Fairhope within the year.

Other themes directly reflected concerns of women at the turn of the century. Howland first addressed the League on the topic of "Women and War." After attending the National Suffrage Convention in 1903, Deliah (Knowles) Bancroft reported on the events. Another active colonist, H. N. Brown lectured on "Scientific Temperance

Instruction in the Schools." She made an address earlier contrasting the present state of the nation with the past, offering the single tax as a remedy. Progressive League meetings also gave visitors a chance to speak, an opportunity women took advantage of. Alice G. Herring, a visitor from Chicago, addressed the League on three separate occasions, once on reincarnation, another on the question "Is the World Growing Better?," and on "What the World Needs Most." According to Herring, who worked as a stenographer for the Secretary of State, the world needed most to cause freedom and not to simply establish the results. The cause of freedom was from within while the results without the cause were only outward changes. Howland referred to the League as "the church of protest."

Speech making was a popular form of entertainment at events. Most speeches made at annual, traditional, or special events, such as the Fairhope anniversary or the Fourth of July, were printed or commented upon by the Courier. Towards the end of the eighteenth century woman speakers were still not common. The first special event at which a woman spoke was the memorial service held by Fairhope for Henry George in 1897. The woman who spoke was Chapman and her speech had immediate effect. She called for the immediate formation of a single tax club and the Baldwin County Single Tax Club was formed with Chapman as secretary.

Musical performances were as important to these public events as the speaking. It was in music that women's talents were especially displayed. Many sung, played instruments, directed the performances of others or taught. At the anniversary celebration of 1898, Chapman directed the glee club and accompanied them on the piano. By the

anniversary celebration of 1899 Mabel Webb has been established as the guitar player of Fairhope and Chapman as the piano player. Women of Fairhope were extremely accomplished in this area. Any reference to a social event included music and women. At the Fourth of July celebration of 1899 five Fairhope girls sang "The Red, White and Blue" with Howland beating the measure. Judging from Chapman's busy schedule and the addition of more music teachers to Fairhope, musical talent was regarded highly as something to be cultivated.

Food, like music, was present at most social events. It was around food that many women of Fairhope first organized. Mrs. Andrews, the manager of the Fairhope Hotel, was the hostess of the 1898 anniversary celebration. Andrews was assisted with preparing and serving the celebration meal by all the ladies of Fairhope. It was decided at the 1899 Fourth of July celebration, by the ladies of the table committee, that each family would be responsible for its food the next year.

In the next year, however, a group of ladies emerged who were to take on the responsibility of food preparation and entertainment for this holiday for the next few years. This group, the Village Improvement Club (VIC), illustrates the many areas women's organizations influenced. The organizations did much more than their names implied.

Many organizations of benefit to the colony were ones in which women were primary figures or instigators. The VIC, organized in 1898 was the project of Sykes. Her interest in the physical development of Fairhope was realized early when she initiated the building

of a bridge across Stacks gulley and donated ten dollars to the project. A few months later the women of Fairhope organized a lunch for the men clearing land for Magnolia Avenue. These were the beginnings of the VIC of which Atkinson was president; Woods, vice-president; Knowles, secretary; and Sykes, treasurer. From the beginning they stated their policy that there would be no initiation dues or fees so that every woman and girl of Fairhope could come be a member. Men, however, could only be honorary members and for a fee of a dollar.

At first the club was active in the physical labor needed to preserve and improve the grounds of Fairhope. The women filled a gully and planted bermuda grass to prevent further erosion. A group organized to clear off brush and leaves from the pavillion which the club had built in the park for public use, one of its first projects. Gradually the VIC became more of a fundraising organization for money to be invested toward public buildings and improvements. As a result their activities became more organizational and social. Much of Fairhope's social activity was planned and carried out by the VIC with profits going toward a predesignated fund. This money was not controlled by the association so the officers and members of the VIC were free to apply it to their chosen causes.

The socials usually centered on some kind of entertainment given by residents of Fairhope. Many times it was music or recitation. On holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas the emphasis was on food, which the VIC usually sold. Box socials, a Valentine's Day celebration and an oyster supper are other examples of the kinds of socials organized. Funds for an auditorium, widening the hall,

buying an organ, and buying school supplies were collected. According to the Courier, many projects involved in the widening of the hall were largely the responsibility of these women. They took responsibility for the ceiling, the battening, the west end and a gallery of portico. With the Fairhope Council's cooperation, Mrs. Anna B. Hail coordinated a managing committee. While Bancroft was president of VIC in 1903, the organization took the responsibility for making the auditorium a reality. They planned for a hall on one floor and a school on the other.

Not all clubs or organizations benefited Fairhope as obviously as the VIC. Several clubs were founded on the common interests of a few residents. Many times the purposes overlapped and the colony benefited in some way. The Literary Society and its women's auxiliary, the Library Review Club were such clubs. Woods as a member of the latter initiated the reading and discussion of Progress and Poverty, a book from which the philosophy of Fairhope as a single tax colony was taken. The Literary Society, composed mainly of women, gave the members an opportunity to discuss books they had read individually through formal reviews. Both clubs took an active interest in the Fairhope library, serving both a private and community function.

Two interesting ideas about the meaning of community evolved from the Economic Living Club and the Parents Club. The purpose of the Economic Living Club, of which Kennedy was the superintendent of cuisine, was a cooperative dining table. Six members of different households, of whom Woods was one, shared the expense and effort of preparation between themselves for the evening meal. The meals

were served at Kennedy's house. A traditional function of the family was being shared by non-family members on a regular basis, thus taking the burden off of the family. The Parents Club did essentially the same thing. Marietta Johnson came to Fairhope with her family and began teaching at the school in 1902. She created the bi-monthly "Parent's Meeting" of which she was president. It met to consider the interests of the children of Fairhope and decided to enforce an evening curfew. Essentially, a potential discipline problem or family decision was taken care of by the community at large. Howland interpreted the motives of this action to be in favor of good study habits and better concentration at school during the day.

In a totally different sphere was the Fruit, Flower and Vegetables Growers Association. It could be compared to an occupational society. Women had their own auxiliary meetings in the afternoon. Their interests lay mostly in gardening, strawberry growing, and poultry raisins. Not being restricted to Fairhope, this group soon evolved into the Baldwin County Agricultural Society (BCAS) with Sykes as president of its "Ladies Auxiliary." The society was one with intellectual interests. It asked Atkinson to research a new grape that had appeared in Bell County, Texas as it might be profitable for vineyards in Alabama.

Many women of Fairhope, like Atkinson, spread themselves between several organizations. This created cohesiveness and cooperation among the groups, perhaps even regardless of the politics involved. For example, the BCAS formed a committee to help the Women's Suffragist Club in organizing a fair for the

coming year. Though many organizations were political or religious, for Fairhope, they provided the same fundraising and social services. A few of these were part of state and national networks and added another dimension to Fairhope by bringing outsiders to the community. The network usually provided added recognition to Fairhope and its ideals. Fairhope received its first official recognition from the National Women's Single Tax League at their annual convention in New York in 1902. Fairhope received an invitation to send delegates, but Mrs. M. H. Brown was chosen, instead, to prepare a letter outlining the work being done at Fairhope. The League responded with an announcement "Resolved, that this conference sends its greeting to the Fairhope colony, which is making the best attempt possible under present laws, to establish the Single Tax."⁵ Ella Wheeler Wilcox, nationally prominent in the Women's Henry George League, made favorable comments publicly in newspapers such as "Hearst's New York" and "Chicago American" about Fairhope. In 1903 the Courier gave her a regular column.

The Fairhope Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) brought to Fairhope many outside women who were professional, national lecturers. Anna Brown Hail was one such lecturer. Before she arrived in Fairhope, Hail had a reputation as a midwestern lecturer on reform topics such as temperance and the single tax. She continued to lecture and attend conferences after her arrival in 1898. Described as a "musically talented woman of superior and varied talents" she lectured in places as far away as Texas and as close as Daphne. She moved to Louisiana shortly after she married in 1898 but returned to Fairhope permanently two years later. She

became a trustee of the colony, established a pharmacy with her husband, founded a Loyal Temperance Legion and became its secretary. In 1902 she was elected district president of the WCTU, a position she held for two years. A temperance convention was held in Fairhope under her direction which addressed such topics as motherhood and young women's work. In addition, welcoming addresses were given by all organizations of the community; addresses were made in place of Sunday church services and the theme of the Progressive League meeting was Temperance. Temperance issues seemed to be a concern in all aspects of Fairhope life.

The concerns of Temperance coincided with many concerns supported by reform groups. It advocated combining religion with reform, giving women the vote, and assuring women the right to decent labor. The early temperance movement was primarily concerned with alcoholic husbands but because of funding problems widened its reform effort to include the interests of more people. Of particular interest to the women of Fairhope were the establishing of kindergartens, working toward franchisement, helping mothers, and reducing alcohol consumption of colony members. In 1903 there were numerous complaints in the Courier referring to the drunkenness of some Fairhoppers. One resident complained that alcohol was being bought and sold without prescribed medical reasons.

Like the other organizations in Fairhope, the WCTU, in addition to its stated goals and concerns, functioned as a social service and fundraiser for the colony. Its fundraisers and volunteer services were much the same as those of the VIC. The proceeds, however, always went toward the school fund. It being a moral influence,

the directed efforts of this organization were not inconsistent.

In addition to the WCTU, the Fairhope Christian church had a Christian Women's Board of Missions. Its function was to, again, raise funds. This was done primarily through parties in the form of ice cream socials, teas, and suppers. This money was primarily circulated through the church and the Sunday School rather than for the benefit of the colony. The benefit the colony received was more in the form of entertaining diversions.

The Women's Suffrage Society benefitted the colony more through education which was achieved by recruiting speakers from outside of Fairhope. By the turn of the century, the various suffrage associations had merged into one movement and educating people about progress in other states was a main priority. For Fairhope and the surrounding area, this was important because one of the most backward areas concerning this question was the South.⁶ Mrs. E. Frederick of Des Moines, Iowa spoke about her work with other woman suffragists in the legislature. A report on the National Suffrage Convention in New Orleans was given by a woman returning from it to Cincinnati. More locally, the president of the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association was a guest speaker.

Dr. Emily Stowe, the dominion president of the Woman's Suffrage Society of Canada, was the guest of Sykes in Fairhope for a winter. She organized the first clubs in Canada and helped secure the municipal vote for women in Ontario in 1883. She gave reports at the meeting on the Canadian National Council of Women and of the Federation of Women's Clubs in the United States. Women's clubs were a common way of blanketing suffrage societies in areas where

their activities would not be tolerated. Before her return to Canada she lectured on her work there and gave practical advice to the Fairhope society.

Women at the Suffrage society gave much time to speculation as to the probable changes in legislation that would come about if women could vote. Prevention of War was one such speculation. One program was devoted to a study of Divorce Laws in Alabama, the legal status of women, and property rights of women. Attorney Mr. Smith, also editor of the Times, lectured on laws affecting women.

Many of the same women involved in the Women's Suffrage Society, Sykes, Knowles, Woods, Gaston, Atkinson, to name a few, were involved in countless other activities and organizations as well. The motivation behind these women was their breadth of interests and their desire for self-improvement. These organizations gave the women an intellectual outlet, leadership opportunities, and a chance to do something for their society. A job or career may have helped many women achieve these goals but most women of working age did not work outside their homes. In 1900 only nine out of thirty-three women living in Fairhope considered themselves employed. Of the twenty-two remaining, eighteen were women with children living at home. Mrs. A. Stuart Dealy was the only woman who considered herself both employed and a mother; she reported to the 1900 census that she worked as a farm laborer. All these women were laborers even if they were officially unemployed. In addition to providing care to their families, many women thought of projects or work they could do at home for added income. Some

primary examples are baking, sewing, photography, music lessons, and taking in boarders.

The employed women throughout the first decade were of different occupations. A few had businesses or were acknowledged partners in a business. Atkinson had originally come to Fairhope with the idea of establishing a sanitorium, but decided instead to own a vineyard and later a fruit export business jointly with Mr. Swift. Mrs. L. P. Wagner owned a restaurant by herself before she was married, then she and her husband opened a new one jointly. Mrs. Wilson and her husband had a bakery. After working at the Fairhope Hotel for several years, Mrs. Axie Andrews started her own boarding house. Lamon also had a fruit farm.

Several women like Call and Andrews were self-employed. Howland considered herself an author, besides being published, she had a regular column in the Courier. Atkinson was trained as a physician which was one of the first professional fields open to women.⁷ Chapman was self-employed as a music teacher, both for voice and instruments. Patterson, who went to the Chicago Art School for one summer described herself as an artist. One summer she created souvenirs from dried magnolia leaves by painting the name Alabama on them. She sold them on commission through Mrs. Call's store.

Being employed by others was profitable for some other women but the jobs available were few. The most obvious job available in Fairhope was teaching. The school employed at least thirteen women in its first eight years. Only once was school taught by a man. While the school was still very small a few women took on

private pupils and as it grew the additional position of principle was offered. The managing of Fairhope Hotel provided a job for Mrs. Axie Andrews, who had previous experience in the business in Chicago, and Mrs. Mott, also from Chicago. A position as a clerk was offered occasionally at the Mershon's store. Outside of Fairhope Bertha Hedges worked as a nurse at Providence Infirmary and Andrews worked as a private nurse. The Baldwin Times, like the Courier, employed typesetters. Opportunities for single women were few and Mabel Webb chose to go to Chicago to find a job where she secured a position at the office of a prohibition paper called the New Voice.

It was not the scarcity of jobs itself that made women decide not to work, but that most were expected to work in their homes. "'Widowers' Nathaniel and Arthur Mershon have the sympathy of the community in the absence of their wives--though both are being well taken care of neither being left without a housekeeper."⁸ While his wife was away, Arthur's daughter, Vera, with the help of her grandmother, took care of his house. Mrs. Dr. Mershon was to take care of her new in-laws' house until Nathaniel's wife, Mrs. Maggie Mershon, and his daughter, Effie, returned. During that time Mershon was offered the teaching position at the Fairhope school but, because of her responsibilities, ^{that} felt she had to postpone beginning.

Though women at Fairhope seem ambitious in their activities and occupations, Fairhope was not necessarily ahead of its time as far as defining new roles to women. Some married women earned income outside of their homes and some single women supported

themselves, however, most of their activities outside the home were defined by the organizations they belonged to and the issues each addressed. Essentially, they employed themselves in the community.

Marie Howland took an interest in all areas of the Fairhope women's lives. Through her regular columns in the Courier, "Extracts from Letters to Friends," she reflected upon the community in all its parts and as a whole and in effect became its judge, however subtle. As its judge, she did not simply sit back and comment but, as always in her life, got involved. When she arrived in Fairhope in 1899 she was sixty years old and came to rest and settle down. "You remind me, dear Alice, that I came down here to 'have a quiet time and grow old peacefully.'"⁹ In a letter to the secretary of Fairhope, E. B. Gaston, Howland confided that she felt overestimated, but that her commitment to the community was strong.

The Courier eagerly announced her decision to come to Fairhope. She was a woman of fame in the world of reform movements. She was described as "a woman of broad culture, an author of deserved reputation, a thinker and worker along reform lines" as well as an accomplished linguist and musician. Her trained profession was teaching and she was a member of the Women's Education Association in Vineland, New Jersey. She had always taken an interest in cultural radicals, trade unionists, and sex reformers, as well as ideas like cooperative housekeeping and economic independence for women. She had a special interest in the employment conditions of women and children. All of these interests led her to support

Victoria Woodhull's apartment hotels, the establishment of child care facilities, and the idea of free love. As a follower of Fourier and authors of socialism, it was not surprising that she lived in two socialist communities, one in France and one in Mexico called Topolobampo. As a reader of George Bellamy and a believer in community living, it was not surprising that she began to be interested in Fairhope.

When she decided to come to Fairhope she assured Gaston that as a single taxpayer she was "anxious to prove the single tax principle right--a right beginning at least."¹⁰ She also promised to increase the subscription list of the Courier, which she did. In further contribution to the community she brought a library of two thousand books and with Sykes as her assistant, she offered a room of her home to put them in, and made the library public. With her experience as editor of the Credit Foncier Company in Mexico she was qualified enough to be asked to be the associate editor of the Courier. The library, the paper, her writing, and her garden kept her busy but she had every intention of being more involved in the colony.

Howland brought culture to Fairhope. Her library supported the two literary societies and made a wide variety of books available to Fairhope. She mentioned being disappointed in the few women who attended her first literary meeting because they sewed during the reading and study. She began a literary column in the Courier called "Jottings Among Our Books" in which she gave a brief sketch of the plot of works chosen for entertainment and educational purposes. Many times she would choose books that she felt could

direct ideas into the community. One such book outlined land ownership concepts that might be of interest to single taxers and another a unique theory of production and community. A book written by a friend suggests innovative housekeeping ideas, the goals of which are less futile cleaning. In response to this book Howland offered her library as a place for discussion. Sometimes "Jottings" were filled with educated advice. One was used to point out the danger of adulterated food and she encouraged eliminating by law unwholesome food. Woods, in particular, was enthusiastic about the "library as an educator," as she announced in her speech at its opening ceremony.

Howland had strong opinions on the education, behavior, and safety of children. In her columns she used stories to hint at opinions she held strongly and to imply approval. One column of her letters contained a story about a Baldwin County girl whose mother insisted she ride "astride." She contrasted this mother with another whose little girl was crippled in a fall because the mother insisted that she ride "cross saddle." Praises about the good health and intelligence of Fairhope children were never ending. She was happy to find a kindergarten at Fairhope and suggested in her column that singing was good for children of that age or in fact any age. She volunteered herself to give music lessons by the Cheve system. She also believed Fairhope children to be very talented and offered to teach French to interested children. She openly admired the Kennedy girls for offering to help her in her house in exchange for their lessons.

Her concerns about Fairhope, and therefore her ~~her~~ letters, involved

more than the children. She commented on all aspects of Fairhope for the gardens and plants, to social functions, to the building of the Fairhope steamer. She actively reported the building process of the boat and the official progress of Fairhope in general. In her first official column written before she became a trustee of the colony, she said she did not approve of the Fairhope council. It was inefficient and there were not enough people making decisions. Later she emphasized emphasizing the positive rather than the negative. Numerous times she wrote to her friends saying there were aspects of Fairhope that were less than satisfactory but that she would not dwell on them. When Fairhoppers complained she wrote, "Man's destiny is to control or modify his climates, to conquer disease-breeding conditions, and to make all his environments a paradise."¹¹ Possibly the only wrong advice she gave residents was advising them to plant kudzu.

Howland was aware of her influence in and beyond Fairhope. For this reason she made a special effort in her column to praise Fairhope, talk about her happiness and ask for contributions to the library. Eventually, long lists of donators and titles appeared in the Courier. It was hearing about Howland's library that prompted Mr. Fels, a wealthy single taxpayer, to make his first of many donations to Fairhope. In a letter to E. B. Gaston in 1899 he asked if he could donate to the library. As a result of her many years as a reformer and of her travels, Howland attracted attention which was positive for Fairhope. Charles Graham wrote from Manchester, England, "Several years ago, I was much interested in articles written by Mrs. Howland in connection with Topolobampo

and judging by the fact of that lady joining you give me the impression that your colony must be such a nesting place as I have long been looking for."¹² Howland was a major worker, supporter and spokeswoman for Fairhope. Laurie B. Allen, a later resident, said of her, "she was like a college education to me."¹³

Marietta Johnson was another woman who was to be a major influence in the history of Fairhope. She espoused many of the same ideas as Howland, especially about children and education. Howland praises the schools' study atmosphere. Johnson is "a great worker . . . with the power to awaken the spirit of study in her pupils. Johnson understands the modern ideas of education."¹⁴ Soon the Courier was filled with announcements from Johnson such as school progress reports and reports of Parent's Meetings. She established a Normal School at Fairhope and was named the Normal Instructor for the teachers of the county. She made several public speeches at Fairhope and at local teachers' conventions. With the erection of the bi-weekly Parents Meeting and the discovery of a dynamic leader in Johnson, Fairhope women found a new cause in education which was to become a unique institution in Fairhope.

Mrs. O. A. Webb, a neighbor of Fairhope proposed an anniversary toast that perhaps best describes the women of Fairhope. "The toast to which I have the honor of responding, is one that embraces the mother, the wife, the daughter, the sister, and if you will the cousin and the aunt. They are ever ready by their sympathy and labor to aid in time of distress or any enterprise for the public benefit."¹⁵

ENDNOTES

¹Fairhope Courier, August 15, 1898. All short quotes, unless otherwise noted, are from the Courier.

²Hayden, The Grand Domestic Revolution, p. 1.

³Courier, April 15, 1900.

⁴Courier, December 15, 1895.

⁵Courier, May 1, 1903.

⁶Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 235.

⁷Scott, The American Woman, p. 46.

⁸Courier, September 1, 1899.

⁹Courier, September 1, 1898.

¹⁰Courier, October 1, 1898.

¹¹Courier, June 15, 1899.

¹²Courier, August 15, 1899.

¹³Hayden, p. 112.

¹⁴Courier, May 1, 1903.

¹⁵Courier, January 15, 1899.

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